Spinal Cord Injury Association of Illinois

Board Member Manual

Manual developed by:

Team Conation

I/O Experts Acting With Purpose
# Table of Contents

**Background and History** ........................................................................................................... 3  
  Mission......................................................................................................................................... 3  
  Vision............................................................................................................................................... 3  
  Board of Directors.......................................................................................................................... 3  

**How does the SCIA fulfill its mission and vision?** ................................................................. 4  
  Information and Referral.................................................................................................................. 4  
  Peer Support.................................................................................................................................. 4  
  Education ......................................................................................................................................... 5  
  Injury Prevention ............................................................................................................................ 5  
  Special Events and Fundraising ....................................................................................................... 5  
  Legislation and Advocacy................................................................................................................ 6  

**Duties and Responsibilities** ....................................................................................................... 6  
  Communication............................................................................................................................... 6  
  Attendance ...................................................................................................................................... 6  
  Financial/Fundraising ...................................................................................................................... 6  
  General ........................................................................................................................................... 7  
  Networking ...................................................................................................................................... 7  
  Events ............................................................................................................................................ 7  

**Repercussions** ........................................................................................................................... 7  

**Dues** .......................................................................................................................................... 8  

**Organizational Structure** ......................................................................................................... 8  

**Board Member Agenda** ........................................................................................................... 9  

**Committees** ............................................................................................................................... 10  
  Establishing Committees ................................................................................................................ 10  
  Composition ................................................................................................................................... 10  
  Meetings ....................................................................................................................................... 10  
  Authority ....................................................................................................................................... 10  
  Client Services Committee ............................................................................................................. 11  
  Fundraising and Special Events Committee .................................................................................... 12  
    Guideline for Successfully Planning a Benefit ............................................................................ 12  
  Membership Committee ................................................................................................................... 13  
  Public Relations and Communications Committee ................................................................. 13  
  Injury Prevention Committee ........................................................................................................ 14  
  Medical and Scientific Advisory Board ....................................................................................... 14  
  Nominating and Awards Committee ............................................................................................ 14  
  Executive Committee ..................................................................................................................... 15  

**Competencies** ........................................................................................................................... 16  

**Resources** ................................................................................................................................... 18  

**Board Member Agreement** ..................................................................................................... 18  

**Notes Page** ............................................................................................................................... 19
Background and History

The Spinal Cord Injury Association of Illinois (formerly NSCIA, Illinois Chapter) is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization providing information and support resources for people paralyzed by trauma and medical conditions, family members, and health care and related professionals that serve the SCI community.

The Spinal Cord Injury Association of Illinois (SCIA) was founded in 1979. It is a chapter of the United Spinal Association. The office of SCIA is located in Palos Heights, IL, but this chapter services the entire state.

Mission:

The Spinal Cord Injury Association of Illinois exists to serve as a comprehensive resource center for individuals who have been personally affected by paralysis, those working in related fields, and other interested persons. The association also exists to assist in preventing new spinal cord injuries from occurring.

Vision:

The Vision of the Spinal Cord Injury Association of Illinois is to:

- Become a Resource Center for Consumers, Families, and Health Care Professionals for Education and Support
- Become a leader in providing quality education. This will be completed by utilizing experts and developing a quarterly series or a few seminars a year and presenting “In Services” in medical facilities and for students in Health Sciences.
- Develop a support network for consumers/families/newly injured to obtain information about living with SCI including offering support for those in rural areas who have limited access to SCIA.
- Advocate in the community and with legislative issues and concerns for persons with disabilities in promoting equality and opportunity (relating to access, vocation, community reentry, etc.)
- Develop an online resource center for consumers/families/health care professionals on SCI and spinal cord related diseases.
- Prevent new injuries from occurring with education and injury prevention programming.

Board of Directors:

In 1979, the original Board was formed by a group of people who had volunteered for what was then the National Paraplegia Foundation (NPF), headquartered in Chicago, Illinois. NPF moved to Massachusetts but the founders, still wanting to be part of the organization, started the Illinois organization and assumed leadership roles until procedures were set in place to incorporate new people.
Candidates for Board positions are selected annually by a nominating committee of at least three people. The Nominating Committee is appointed by the Board.

Candidates are chosen from among people who are actively involved in the organization’s work and are deemed to be capable of furthering the SCIA cause. Generally we have representatives from rehabilitation hospitals that have spinal cord injury units to help maintain a strong knowledge base about current trends in care and research. We also have a position reserved for the Vaughn Chapter of the Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA) and this person is appointed by PVA. Any SCIA member who is interested in serving on the Board is welcome to be considered as a candidate for election by the membership but they will be encouraged to attend Board meetings and serve on a committee for a year prior to seeking a Board position.

How does the SCIA fulfill its mission and vision?

Through the following services:

- **Information and Referral** - This takes place on a daily basis as people make contact looking for things such as facilities that specialize in spinal cord injury care, making home modifications, purchasing medical equipment and supplies, disability benefits, and just about anything else that a person needs to sustain life with a severe disability. The onset of paralysis is so overwhelming that many people don’t even know what to ask for, but they do find a place where they can comfortably find direction. It is important to note that the majority of the SCIA’s services come from this category. Many individuals might call the association for information once while others ask for our assistance many times throughout their lives. Whatever the request, the SCIA tries to be of help.

- **Peer Support** – The SCIA provides peer support in a variety of ways.
  - **Peer Support Group** - Meetings are held on a monthly basis so that individuals who are affected by Spinal Cord Injuries may meet and talk with others who are living in the community. At present, groups meet at Advocate Christ Hospital in Oak Lawn, Marianjoy Rehabilitation Hospital in Wheaton and Hope Clinic in Springfield.
  - **One-On-One Peer Support**: The second form of peer support provided by the SCIA is available for those individuals who are not able to participate in the peer groups or may have issues to discuss on a more personal basis. SCIA members who participate in the peer support program attend an orientation session and are given program guidelines to follow whenever they are representing SCIA. Orientation sessions are held in rehabilitation hospitals with at least one of their staff members participating. While hospital staff do not attend peer visits because that would interfere with the personal nature of the program, they generally follow-up to make certain that the meetings went well.
  - **Letters of Support** - On occasion, hospitals or other organizations, which are applying for grants, will request support from the SCIA. These grants
are used to enhance the life for people with disabilities. If the proposed project is deemed to be of value, such support is given.

- **Education** – These programs are presented for the benefit of those individuals who are spinal cord injured and their families, as well as health-science professionals. Professionals working in spinal cord injury or disability related fields are called upon to share their expertise on a volunteer basis so that programs can be presented free of charge or at a minimal cost. With some of these programs, continuing education is offered to health science professionals. *A Patient's Perspective* is frequently presented to students of Physical Therapy, Occupational Therapy and as “in services” for hospital staffs.
  - **A Patient’s Perspective** - The SCIA presents a program entitled “A Patient’s Perspective”. This program is presented to hospital personnel and health professional students so that they have an opportunity to learn what it’s like to become paralyzed and things that they can do to facilitate adjustment to injury. It is an opportunity to sensitize caregivers about the impact on individuals and family members when one sustains a severe disability.
  - **Research Projects, Studies and Surveys** – These are conducted by professionals and students working in masters and doctorate programs. In the interest of bringing about better care and hopefully the ultimate cure, as we are called upon to do so, the association helps to recruit project participants.

- **Injury Prevention** – SCIA uses a variety of mediums to assist in preventing spinal cord injuries from occurring. One of the largest initiatives used is called “THINK FIRST”.
  - **THINK FIRST** - Junior and senior high school students are the targeted audience because they are approaching the age when they are most at risk for injury but other groups may also request programs. Most brain and spinal cord injuries are the result of the same causes and most can be prevented. Members who are spinal cord injured go into schools to talk with young people about their own injury and to encourage safety conscious attitudes. Programs are so well received by students and faculty that many teachers have made THINK FIRST part of their curriculum and invite SCIA back for every rotation of students. During recent years we have been averaging 40 classroom presentations to approximately 2,500 students. We also participate in health fairs and other community events, usually by staffing an exhibit related to injury prevention. In late 2014 a new component to the program is beginning to target senior citizens with information on prevention of falls because as people age, falls become the leading cause of SCI.

- **Special Events and Fundraising** – One of the most important aspects of being a part of the SCIA is spreading the word of our organization. The best way to do so, is through events and fundraisers.
o **Beyond Boundaries** – This is program that the SCIA takes part in. This program does not fundraise. It is a unique three-day, outdoor adventure including activities such as camping, kayaking and rock-climbing. Teams from rehabilitation hospitals participate. Each team has about six members including people who are paralyzed. For participants who are spinal cord injured, this experience can be life-changing as it offers not only the vision of what can still be done following the onset of paralysis, it actually allows them the opportunity to do it. This experience has also been extremely beneficial to hospital staff as they can expand their thinking about post-rehabilitation activities for their patients.

o **Winter Benefit and Dinner** – Each year, the SCIA has a Winter Benefit and Dinner. This is one of the SCIA’s main fundraisers.

o **Golf Outing** – Each year, the SCIA also hosts a golf outing. This is also used as a fundraising source.

o **Bank of America Chicago Marathon** - The SCIA is given recognition as a participating charity in the Bank of America Chicago Marathon and recruits runners to be part of the SCIA Run for Those Who Roll team.

- **Legislation and Advocacy** – A committee is in place to assist with this activity. In order to educate and motivate our membership, this committee periodically disseminates information about pending legislative issues that may impact the lives of people with disabilities.

**Duties and Responsibilities**

SCIA Board Members are responsible for Communication, Attendance, Fundraising and Finances, Networking, Events and other general duties:

**Communication**
- Promptly answer emails and phone calls
- Acknowledge receipt of email
- Keep other board members informed of progress on tasks.
- While we realize each board member has commitments outside of SCIA, it is imperative that board members remained engaged in communication in order to achieve our mission.

**Attendance**
- Attend at least 4 of the 6 yearly meetings
- Provide 6 days notice if you will miss a regularly scheduled board meeting
- Use any medium possible to attend a board meeting

**Financial/Fundraising**
- Pay yearly dues
- Raise $1,000 each year
- Actively participate in fundraising events
- Assist with planning fundraising events
- Assist with bringing participants and supplies to events
- Actively participate in planning the budget
Repercussions

If Board Members do not comply with the responsibilities provided in this manual, the following repercussions will occur:

- Fulfill the mission and vision of SCIA
- Understand Spinal Cord Injuries
- Have knowledge of injury prevention and SCI legislation including the Americans with Disabilities Act
- Actively serve on at least one standing committee
- Periodically participate in evaluating the Board and organization
- Representation of the SCIA must be approved by the Board of Directors and Executive Committee
- Avoid all conflicts of interest and activities that might cause embarrassment to SCIA
- Understand there is a morally responsibility for the health and well being of the SCIA
- Participate in creating work plans and setting goals for the SCIA

- Build contacts and relationships to build SCIA
- Attract and recruit new members
- Utilize existing network, family, and friends to further SCIA

- Understand your role in planning and executing events
- Attend events if time allows
- Reference Benefit Planning Guideline on page 12 for more specific details

- Removal from the board if the member is not actively involved
- Two consecutive excused absences might result in contact from the President of Board of Directors asking to recommit to SCIA or relinquish the position
- Two unexcused absences over the course of a year will result in notification by mail/email that the position on the Board has been forefeited
- The board member is personally liable for any debts incurred if the organization becomes the subject of a suit from a private person or Government
**Dues**

SCIA depends on contributions and membership fees to provide its’ services. Board Members and Members of the organization are required to pay dues.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Membership Category</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Persons with SCI and family members</td>
<td>Free</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>$25-$50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>$50-$100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Organizational Structure**

The SCIA consists of 2 employees. The only full-time employee is the Executive Director. A part-time employee exists for administrative support.

The remainder of the work is done on a volunteer basis by the Board of Directors, a Medical & Scientific Advisory Board and other persons interested in the cause of SCIA.
Board Meeting Agenda

1. Call to Order
2. Attendance
3. Introductions
4. Approval of Minutes
5. Financial Report
6. Budget
7. Standing Committee Reports
8. Awards and Nominations
9. Legislative and Policy
10. Old Business
11. New Business
12. Adjournment
Committees

Establishing Committees
The Board of Directors establishes standing Committees as are specified in the bylaws to accomplish the purpose and programs of this association and may establish special committees and/or subcommittees as deemed necessary.

Composition
Each committee will be composed of a Chairperson and at least two (2) other individuals.

Meetings
The chairperson is responsible for scheduling meetings of the committee and for reporting committee activities to the Board of Directors and the Board must make final decisions regarding any action that will be taken.

Authority
A committee cannot obligate the association to any action or expense. They can make recommendations to the Board of Directors and the Board must make final decisions. Budgets for events must be approved by the Board and for reimbursement of any pre-approved expenses, it is incumbent upon the Committee Chair to furnish receipts to the SCIA office within 21 days of the expense having been incurred.
Client Services Committee:

This committee consists of several subcommittees. They are listed in **bold**.

**Information & Referral:** This is one of the principal functions of SCIA and is done by the staff. A broad knowledge base about spinal cord injury and disability related issues is required as is the ability to access information to help answer questions.

**Peer Support** is provided on an individual basis to injured persons and family members. Persons interested in providing peer support are asked to attend a training session so that SCIA is assured that they understand the program guidelines. Orientation sessions also provide us the opportunity to meet and screen people so that we are confident that SCIA is being well represented.

Peer Groups that meet on a monthly basis are another mechanism for providing invaluable support. Support groups should be available throughout the state so that people have reasonable geographic access to them.

**Legislation & Advocacy:** This committee is responsible for monitoring legislative activities that may impact the lives of people with physical disabilities. An organization such as SCIA is prohibited from supporting any candidate for public office but we are allowed to educate our membership about issues.

To educate and encourage action on the part of the community, the Legislative Committee can:

- Distribute e-mail alerts about pending issues
- Contact legislators by email, mail and in-person
- Write newsletter articles
- Distribute press releases
- Network with other organizations

**Education:** This committee presents educational programs for SCI individuals and their families, as well as for professionals. This may be in the form of:

- Presenting lectures on a single topic of interest
- Presenting multi-topics in a seminar format
- Participating in “In Services” in hospitals and in health science classes, on SCI and “A Patient’s Perspective”
- Reviewing and updating informational pieces distributed by mail, at events and on the web site
- Writing articles related to complications of SCI

**Social Activities:** At present, there is not a specific committee for Social Activities. However, events such as the winter benefit and Beyond Boundaries address this in an indirect way
Fundraising and Special Events Committee:

- **Fundraising:**
  - This portion of the committee exists to create an Annual Development Plan including:
    - Drafting Letters of Appeal
    - Expanding participation in the *Community Health Charities of Illinois*
    - Researching corporate and foundation guidelines for giving
    - Writing proposals for funding of programs
    - Making “in person” presentations to corporations and foundations

- **Special Events:**
  - Each event has its own committee and, with the exception of the Chicago Marathon, planning a special event is basically the same regardless of its nature. Please see the Benefit Planning Guideline below.
  - In addition to the Marathon, we have held a dinner in February for many years. The ticket cost is kept as low as possible so that many people with SCI and their families are able to attend. This is a casual evening that includes dinner, dancing, raffles, games, and a silent auction.
  - A golf outing has been held each of the last ten summers. Along with golf there is a dinner, raffle, and silent auction.

### Guideline for Successfully Planning a Benefit

- Determine type of event
- Create a budget
  - Must be approved by Board
- Set a time frame for the event
  - Be mindful of holidays, including those of religious denominations
- Set an anticipated number of attendees
  - Usually benefits draw 100-150 guests
- Find a wheelchair accessible location
- Find out information on the parking lot
  - Is it large enough for the event?
  - Does the venue offer valet parking?
- If there will be raffles and silent auction, estimate the number of 6- or 8-foot tables that will be needed. Will there be a rental fee?
- Will there be raffles and/or silent auctions? If so,
  - Estimate size/number of tables that are needed
  - Is there a rental fee? (Be sure to include this in the budget)
  - Are linens included?
- How will food be served?
  - Example: Seated dinner, food stations, buffet, etc.
- There should be adequate seating for all guests
What size are the tables?
- Confirm set-up time for the event to assure we will have enough time to prepare
- Will we need specific technological equipment?
  - Is a sound system needed?
    - If so, does the facility have one available or do we have to rent it from another source?
  - Are a screen, DVD player, and/or computer available?
    - If so, is there a charge?
- We do **not** pay sales tax and the facility will require a letter of confirmation
- Determine who will design and print the invitation
- Plan when the invitations should be mailed
  - Invitations are sent by bulk mail and it can take 2-3 weeks for delivery
- If sponsors, raffle prizes and auction items are going to be asked for, draft a letter of request and generate a mailing list.
- If sponsors, raffle prizes, and/or auction items are going to be asked for:
  - Draft a letter of request
  - Generate a mailing list
- Everyone on the committee should assist with:
  - Getting sponsors and gifts
  - Preparing the mailing of invitations
  - Setting up the event and cleaning

**Membership Committee:**

The primary purpose of the Membership Committee is to help assure that those personally impacted by SCI, as well as those working in related fields, know about the organization and utilize our services. To help maintain a close relationship with facilities that treat SCI and vendors that serve people with SCI committee members should:

- Identify key personnel in hospitals, rehab facilities and vendors to foster referrals and peer support.
- All key personnel should have the Self-Referral Form available for clients so that they can immediately be added to SCIA mailing lists.
- Brochures should be made available and supplies should be maintained.
- Incentives for membership such as discounts for events and for vendor purchases.
- Promote membership at all association events

**Public Relations and Communications Committee:**

The purpose of this committee is to promote awareness of SCIA by:

- Monitoring the website content and editing as is necessary
- Maintaining a strong presence in Social Media networks
- Review and edit existing printed materials and create new materials as are needed
- Contribute articles for *SCI Illinois*, the associations newsletter
• Issue press releases to print and electronic media for all events, education programs and other programs
• Issue seasonal press releases and public service announcements on injury prevention
• Generate human interest stories

**Injury Prevention Committee:**

Because most traumatically acquired spinal cord injuries can be prevented by taking simple precautionary measures, Injury Prevention is a vital SCIA service and we belong to *Think First*, a national Brain and SCI Prevention Program. Programs are presented free of charge to junior and senior high schools and other groups.

The work of the Injury Prevention Committee is to:

• Help recruit and train individuals who have sustained traumatic injuries as well as allied health professionals to present programs. A guideline and program materials are available to help with the training and presentations.
• Schedule presentations for school students
• Schedule presentations for other groups such as service organizations, men’s clubs, women’s clubs, chambers of commerce, etc.
• Schedule and help staff participation at various community events such as health fairs and disability awareness days. This is generally done by displaying a table-top exhibit focusing on injury prevention and the organization’s services.
• Work with the PR Committee to generate press releases, public service announcements and review printed materials

**Medical and Scientific Advisory Board:**

Advisory Board Members are appointed by the Board of Directors. Advisory Board Members should be willing to:

• Advise the Board on current and developing topics concerning SCI
• Assist in formulating and reviewing the Association’s official position on medical and scientific issues.
• Assist staff in answering medically-related questions.
• Assist in the planning and the presentation of educational programs on both professional and lay levels.

**Nominating and Awards Committee:**

This committee is composed of at least three (3) members and is appointed by the President at least ninety (90) days prior to annual meeting. Their job is to recruit potential members who are deemed capable of fulfilling the board’s responsibilities. Recommendations are presented to the Board and the final slate is the presented to the membership for election.
It is also the responsibility to suggest individuals who have served in an outstanding manner for consideration of any awards given by SCIA. At present there are two, the James Smittkamp and The Kara Foundation. Certificates of Appreciation can also be given to deserving individuals.

**Recommendations for board positions and awards are given to the Board to make final decisions.**

**Executive Committee:**

This committee consists of the four elected officers: President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, and the Executive Director.

This committee acts on behalf of the full Board regarding policy and issues that may surface and require immediate attention when the full Board is not in session. Action of the Executive Committee must be ratified by the full Board at its next regular or special meeting.
Competencies

Competencies are Knowledge, Skills, Abilities and Behaviors that are critical to successful job performance. The competencies below are necessary for a Board Member to have in order to assist in achieving the SCIA’s vision.
**Collaboration**- Members are expected to complete tasks with fellow members in order to reach the goals of SCIA. Each board member comes from a different educational and work background. It is important that we utilize our backgrounds and collaborate in order to provide innovative solutions to our clients.

**Active Listening**- Members must be engaged in communication. It is important that each member comprehends, retains, and responds to messages. Meeting times are limited, so if a member is not actively listening while another member speaks, the meeting time has essentially been wasted.

**Punctuality**- Members will be on time in regards to both the completion of tasks and their arrival to meetings and events. It is understood that each board member has a life outside of the SCIA. However, punctuality allows for the SCIA to remain a productive organization. If a member is to be late to a meeting or on a deadline, the Executive Director should be notified accordingly.

**Conscientiousness**- Members are expected to be organized, efficient, and aware of the needs of others. A conscientious board member fulfills commitments in a professional, thorough and consistent manner through self-discipline and a sense of duty. Additionally, the board member should show a strong attention to detail and a focus on quality.

**Open Communication**- The board member will foster an atmosphere in which duty-quality information flows smoothly up and down, inside and out of the organization. Board Members are encouraged and should encourage others to openly express their ideas and opinions.

**Professionalism**- Members will act in an appropriate manner that upholds the ethical and moral values of SCIA. A professional board member will think carefully about the effects on others of one’s words, actions, appearance and behavior. The board member will work to develop and maintain positive working relationships.

**Advocacy**- Members will work to inform and educate the community on Spinal Cord Injuries. As a non-profit organization, our main mission is to find new ways to serve the individuals who have Spinal Cord Injuries. A board member must have the urge to advocate for individuals with spinal cord injuries because they are our reason for being.

**Accountability**- Members are expected to complete their assigned tasks. Clear expectations are provided to board members and it is the board members duty to abide by these expectations. Additionally, Board Members need to actively hold other board members accountable. Without an environment of accountability, no board members will exceed the expectations of the SCIA.
Resources

Information on Free Injury Prevention Programs
http://www.sci-illinois.org/education

Information on Legislation Related to SCI
http://www.sci-illinois.org/legislation

Information on Americans with Disabilities Ac
http://www.ada.gov/

Spinal Cord Injury Association of Illinois Website
http://www.sci-illinois.org

Board Member Agreement

Every board member is making a statement of faith about his/her own level of participation and the expectation is that other board members are doing the same. We trust each other to carry out the above agreements to the best of our ability, each in our own way, with knowledge, approval and the support of all. I know that if I fail to act in good faith, I must resign, or I may be asked by the Executive Committee, to resign.

In its turn, SCIA is responsible to me in a number of ways:

I will be sent without request, financial reports that allow me to meet the “prudent person” section of the law.

I can call on the staff and other Board members to discuss programs and policies, goals, and objectives.

Board members and staff will respond in a straightforward and thorough manner to any questions I have that I feel are necessary to carry out my fiscal, legal, or moral responsibilities to this organization.

_____________________________________
Printed Name of Candidate

_____________________________________
Signature

_____________________________________
Date